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LEAST OF THIS DATE, SEPTEMBER 19. LOCAL AFGHAN SOURCES WHOM WE REGARD AS RELIABLE HAVE STATED THAT TARAKI IS ALIVE AND BEING KEPT AT A GOVERNMENT REST HOUSE. AN EASTERN EUROPEAN AMBASSADOR GAVE THIS SAME INFORMATION TO OUR CHARGE ON SEPTEMBER 19.

4. WHATEVER THE TRUTH, HOWEVER, MOST AFGHANS BELIEVE THAT TARAKI IS DEAD. INDEED, THE AFP REPORT REFLECTS ONE OF THE RUMORS OFTEN HEARD HERE. HIS PICTURES HAVE DISAPPEARED -- AND HIS NAME IS RAPIDLY FADING OUT OF EARSHOT. PRESIDENT HAFIZULLAH AMIN DID NOT REFER TO HIS PREDECESSOR BY NAME IN HIS MAIDEN PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS OF SEPTEMBER 17 -- AND MIGHT ELECT TO CONTINUE THIS STRATEGY OF CRITICIZING HIS FORMER "GREAT TEACHER" ONLY OBLIQUELY FOR "PAST MISTAKES." WHEN TARAKI EVENTUALLY PASSES ON, THE KHALQI REGIME, FOLLOWING MANY AFGHAN PRECEDENTS, MAY BURY HIM QUIETLY AND NOT MAKE ANY OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT. BECAUSE HE HAS ALREADY "DIED" ONCE, THE LOCAL RUMOR MILL MAY NOT PICK UP THAT EVENT WHEN IT OCCURS. AMSTUTZ

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